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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0934
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON PRIORITY 2692
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1193
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SUBJECT: BANGLADESH POSITION ON THIRD COMMITTEE HUMAN
RIGHTS RESOLUTIONS - IRAN, DPRK, BURMA

REF: STATE 117901

Classified By: Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Geeta Pasi. Reas
ons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) On November 9, PolOff met with the Senior Assistant Secretary for the UN and Human Rights Wing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to encourage the Government of Bangladesh's (GOB) support on human rights resolutions pending before the Third Committee of the 63rd session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA). PolOff encouraged the GOB to vote against "no action" motions and in favor of the substantive human rights resolutions on Iran, Burma and North Korea (DPRK), reiterating the USG approach to the use of "no action" motions, which prevent discussion of the very human rights issues the Third Committee is meant to address.

12. (C) The Senior Assistant Secretary responded that Bangladesh had not yet taken any decision but promised that the Foreign Minister would consider the matter. He added that Bangladesh had typically voted to abstain based on the principle that the "middle path is the safest." The GOB also opposes country specific resolutions in principle and argues such cases should be brought before the UN Human Rights Council. In 2007, Bangladesh broke with convention by voting with the USG on the DPRK * allegedly to send a strong statement to the government * but against the USG on Iran and Burma. PolOff replied that unlike the Human Rights Council, the UNGA is the only body comprised of all 197 member states and that human rights conditions in Iran, Burma and North Korea had reached a critical point.

13. (C) In the absence of the Foreign Adviser, who is traveling outside Bangladesh, the DCM spoke with Xulfiqur Rahman, Director General of UN and Multilateral Economic Affairs, on November 12. The DCM reviewed reftels, underscoring the importance the U.S. attaches to upcoming human rights resolutions in the UNGA Third Committee. Mr. Rahman confirmed that Bangladesh would likely follow its traditional practice of abstaining on votes on human rights issues in the UNGA Third Committee, noting Bangladesh's support of the U.S. position on DPRK last year was atypical. He said the GOB had yet to decide how it would respond to a "no action" motion. He confirmed that the Japanese Embassy had demarched his office on DPRK, urging support of a resolution on the human rights situation there. Although new to his current job, Mr. Rahman earlier served at the Bangladeshi Mission to the UN. He substantiated Bangladesh's standard practice of abstaining on these types of votes.

Comment

¶4. (C) Bangladesh's voting appears to be dictated by a complex mix of politics, principled opposition and group dynamics, as the country is party to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Nonaligned Movement (NAM) and G-77. Bangladesh appears not to have reached a final decision on the "non action" motion, and based on our discussions with Mr. Rahman, it appears Bangladesh will follow its traditional practice of abstaining.
Moriarty